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THE PUTRID SOUL.

A POETICAL EPISTLE TO JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

ON HIS DISQUISITIONS RELATING TO MATTER AND SPIRIT.

For Falſhood of this ſtrange *prepoſt'rous* Sort
Sets firm-ey'd Reaſon on a gaze, miſtruſting
That what ſhe ſees in palpable plain Form,
The Stars in yon blue Arch, theſe Woods, theſe Caverns,
Are all mere Tricks of Cozenage; nothing real;
The Viſion of a Viſion.

MASON'S CARACTACUS.

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AND
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XII

A POETICAL EPISTLE, &c.

PERMIT a Bard, moſt ſage Divine!
Who never with the tuneful Nine
Of Helicon's fam'd ſpring has quaff'd;
Or with the God of Humour laugh'd,
On the Parnaſſian hill reclin'd,
With ſportive tongue, and jocund mind;
Permit, I ſay, an unlearn'd Muſe
Your learned Treatiſe to peruſe,
Wherein you make ſo great a clatter
About the wond'rous Pow'rs of Matter;
And by the rules of common ſenſe
(To that alone he makes pretence),

Judge

Judge if its tenets well agree
With Reaſon and Philoſophy.
Not that new-fangled ſort of Reaſon
Which Scepticks uſe their doubts to ſeaſon;
Nor that Philoſophy which tends
Only to ſpeculative ends;
But Reaſon drawn from Truth's clear ſpring,
That will conviction with it bring;
And ſkill, in which the power lies
To make men happy, good, and wiſe.
The eminence on which you ſtand
Shall not reſtrain my daring hand;
Nor F R S, or L L D,
Preſerve you from my rallery.
Candour, howe'er, my pen ſhall guide;
And ev'ry ranc'rous thought ſubſide;
For though I diſapprove his plan,
I truly venerate the man.

" Pray,

* " Pray, Sir! are you that ſage philoſopher
" Who read all Alexander Roſs over?"
And therefore fancy you can ſee
Quite through a mill-ſtone: whilſt poor we,
Of denſer ſight, can only ſcan
Its rough outſide, do all we can?
If you ſuppoſe the world is made
Of Cubes of Nothing thinly laid,

And

* Hudibras. Canto II. Line 1.

Line 38. Of Cubes of Nothing, &c.—Dr. Prieſtley having maintained, in the firſt ſection of his work (if I underſtand him aright), that Matter is not, as it is uſually ſuppoſed to be, ſolid, impenetrable, and inactive; but that it is poſſeſſed alone of the powers of attraction and repulſion, by which it is rendered active, and conſequently, that it might be able of itſelf to perform all the operations commonly aſcribed to Spirit, thus proceeds in the ſecond ſection, page 16. " It will be " ſaid, that if Matter be not a ſolid or impenetrable ſubſtance, *What is* " *it?* I anſwer with reſpect to this, as I ſhould with reſpect to any " other ſubſtance, that it is poſſeſſed of ſuch properties, and ſuch " only, as the actual well-examined *appearances* prove it to be poſſeſſed " of. That it is poſſeſſed of powers of attraction and repulſion, and of " ſeveral ſpheres of them, one within another, I know; becauſe ap- " pearances cannot be explained without ſuppoſing them; but that " there is any thing in, or belonging to Matter capable of reſiſtance,

And theſe with mighty pow'rs endow'd?

Why may not others be allow'd,

(Jogging

" beſides thoſe powers of repulſion, does not appear from any phæno-
" mena that we are acquainted with; and therefore, as a philoſopher,
" I am not authorized to conclude that any ſuch a thing exiſts. On
" the contrary, I am obliged to deny that Matter has ſuch a property.
" If I be aſked how, upon this hypotheſis, *Matter* differs from *Spirit*,
" if there be nothing in Matter that is properly ſolid or impenetrable;
" I anſwer, that it no way concerns me, or true philoſophy, to main-
" tain that there is any ſuch difference between them as has hitherto
" been ſuppoſed. On the contrary, I conſider the notion of the union
" and mutual influences of ſubſtances ſo eſſentially different from one
" another, as *material* and *immaterial* ſubſtances have been repreſented,
" as an opinion attended with difficulties infinitely embarraſſing, and
" indeed actually inſuperable." In the next page the Doctor further ſays, " It has been aſſerted, and the aſſertion has never been diſ-
" proved, that for any thing we know to the contrary, all the ſolid
" Matter in the ſolar ſyſtem might be contained within a nut-ſhell,
" there is ſo great a proportion of *void* ſpace within the ſubſtance of
" the moſt ſolid bodies. Now when ſolidity had apparently ſo very
" little to do in the ſyſtem, it is really a wonder that it did not occur
" to philoſophers ſooner, that there might be nothing for it to do at
" all, and that there might be no ſuch thing in nature." I acknowledge that it is not *impoſſible* but this might be the caſe; the hypotheſis, however, ſeems ſo incompatible with common appearances (I know not in what manner they preſent themſelves to the eye of a minute philoſopher), and ſo far beyond our conception, that it requires a much greater degree of credulity to believe it, than thoſe concluſions which are uſually drawn. That there is, perhaps, in Matter nearly an equal portion of vacuity and ſolidity, may readily be allowed; but that

(Jogging on through the beaten road
That many a wiſer man has trod)
Matter and Spirit both to own?
Although 'tis not exactly known
By what impulſive means the latter
Gives motion to inactive Matter.
Of one alone will you admit
A ſcanty *quantum ſufficit*.
Spirit you quite annihilate,
And much of Matter you abate;
Robbing it of ſolidity,
Its once undoubted property;
And ſubſtituting in its place
Imaginary powers or ſpace.

that there ſhould be ſo great a diſproportion, when the ſame power which created enough to fill a nut-ſhell, could, with the ſame eaſe, have made ſufficient to anſwer all the viſible purpoſes of Creation, and have diſtributed throughout Nature a proper quantity of it, and that real, as it appears to our ſenſes, and not imaginary, as ſuppoſed by the Doctor, is neither conſiſtent with the attributes of the Deity, nor the comprehenſion of his rational creatures.

If

If it poſſeſs the powers you ſay,
Atoms would ever be at play;
Repelling ſome, and ſome attracting;
What ſcenes would conſtantly be acting!
And each no longer keep its ſtation
By the laws of gravitation.
The maſſy fragment which a ſhock
May rend from yonder craggy rock,
Will, as it rolls into the vale,
O'er ev'ry lighter maſs prevail;
And, thus increaſed, once more adhere
To the moſt powerful rock that's near;
And thereunto annex'd remain,
Until repell'd it moves again.
So when we view a caſtle-wall
Rent by a pond'rous cannon-ball,
We muſt conclude from your new rules
(Our *reas'ning* fathers being fools),

That

That 'tis not ſolid brick or ſtone
Which ſolid iron has o'erthrown;
But that a *Nothing* did attract,
And had not ſtrength to counteract,
By its repulſive force, the thing,
(The *Thing!* your pardon Sir, the *Nothing*)
Which its attractive power drew
So forcibly, that it o'erthrew
Both principles; and there they lie,
Attraction with repulſion by:

Though

Line 82. *Attraction with repulſion by.*] As Dr. Prieſtley has limited the Matter which conſtitutes this ſyſtem to ſo ſmall a quantity, and deprived even that of ſolidity, every thing which to vulgar eyes has the appearance of Matter, according to his hypotheſis, conſiſts ſimply of the powers of attraction and repulſion; by different ſpheres of which, the ſmall quantity of Matter he allows of, after being infinitely divided, is ſurrounded; and this, I think, I may be allowed to term *Nothing*, or nearly Nothing; for ſolidity alone, according to our ideas, can entitle any thing to the denomination of ſubſtance or thing. Thus, if there is but a grain of Matter in the fragment of a rock (and, according to the calculation of theſe modern philoſophers, that is an enormous quantity), the viſible bulk of it muſt be made up

Though Ignoramuſes may call
This free-ſtone, that a cannon-ball.
You ſay it alſo does inherit
Such of the properties of Spirit,

As

by the powers of attraction and repulſion, rendered ſomehow or other diſcernable to human ſight. If alſo the laws of gravity are exploded, and theſe new powers ſubſtituted in their room, all large bodies muſt be ſuppoſed, by the ſuperior quantity of attraction they bear about them, to overcome and draw towards them thoſe of leſs magnitude. And if all bodies are poſſeſſed of an equal quantity of theſe powers, ſometimes one muſt be predominant, ſometimes the other, and their acting uncertain. Thus, likewiſe, if there is no ſolidity even in a ſtone-wall or a cannon-bullet, and we ſee the one demoliſhed, and the other lying among the ruins (as is often the caſe in towns that have been beſieged), from the Doctor's concluſions, it can only be theſe newly diſcovered powers which lye there in the fancied ſhape of a ruined turret, and a cannon-ball.

Line 86. *Such of the properties of Spirit.*] The Doctor ſays, page 18. "Since the only reaſon why the principle of thought or ſenſation "has been imagined to be incompatible with Matter goes upon the "ſuppoſition of impenetrability being the eſſential property of it, and "conſequently that *ſolid extent* is the foundation of all the properties "that it can poſſibly ſuſtain, the whole argument for an immaterial "thinking principle in man, on this new ſuppoſition, falls to the "ground; Matter, deſtitute of what has hitherto been called *ſolidity*, "being no more incompatible with ſenſation and thought, than that "ſubſtance, which, without knowing any thing farther about it, we "have been uſed to call *immaterial*." He ſays alſo, page 81. "Moſt

"of

As give it power to fulfil

The various purpoſes, of will,

" of the objections that have been made to the poſſibility of the powers " of ſenſation and thought belonging to Matter, are entirely founded " on a miſtaken notion of Matter, as being neceſſarily inert and impe- " netrable, and not a thing poſſeſſed of *no other* powers than thoſe of " attraction and repulſion, and ſuch as may be conſiſtent with them." And, in the next page, he thus anſwers the firſt of theſe objections: " It is ſaid we can have no conception how ſenſation or thought can " ariſe from Matter, they being things ſo very different from it, and " bearing no ſort of reſemblance to any thing like figure or motion; " which is all that can reſult from any modification of Matter, or any " operation upon it. But this is an argument which derives all its " force from our *ignorance*. Different as are the properties of ſenſa- " tion and thought from ſuch as are uſually aſcribed to Matter, they " may nevertheleſs inhere in the ſame ſubſtance, unleſs we can ſhew " them to be abſolutely incompatible with one another. There is no " apparent reſemblance between the ideas of ſight and thoſe of hear- " ing or ſmelling, &c. and yet they all exiſt in the ſame mind, which " is poſſeſſed of the very different ſenſes and faculties appropriated to " each of them." Theſe are ſome of the reaſons given by the Doctor in ſupport of his hypotheſis. The argument, however, might be reduced to a very few words, if cleared from the philoſophical or rather ſophiſtical reaſons with which it is uſually encumbered. If Matter be endowed with the properties commonly attributed to what is termed Spirit, it muſt be ſelf-active, or able to put itſelf in motion without any foreign aid; and this endowment could not have been partially beſtowed by the Creator, but given to every atom at its creation; conſequently, no part could remain inanimate or incapable of giving itſelf motion. Whether it is poſſeſſed of this power or not, the moſt ignorant obſerver, by looking around him, will be able in a moment to determine.

And faculties of every kind
That conſtitute the human mind.
If Matter be with theſe endow'd,
And they're impartially beſtow'd;
Throughout all Nature are the ſame;
That which inanimate we name
Would of the general bounty ſhare,
And animated too appear.
Yet this we ſee is not the caſe.
The rotund bowl will keep its place,
When once the foreign force is gone,
Till ſome new impulſe drives it on.
But could it, by its innate pow'rs,
Self-mov'd, proceed for untold hours,
And ſtop at once, as choice directs;
We then may judge that it reflects,
Compares, and thinks; and is inclin'd
By the ſame laws that rule the mind.

With

With equal truth it might be ſaid,
When Ocean rears its foaming head
In dreadful billows to the ſkies,
The grand combuſtion does ariſe
From innate properties, which lie
Within the vaſt profundity;
And that ſelf-mov'd it would have rag'd,
Of its own choice this war have wag'd,
Had ev'ry dread tempeſtuous wind
Been in th' Æolian dens confin'd.

Nor here you ſtop; theſe truths ſuppos'd,
You from them, as at firſt propos'd,
Concluſions draw of greater weight,
Relating to a future ſtate.
You ſay, and for it quote Saint Paul,
Th' Automaton which man we call,

As Matter conſtitutes the whole

Both of his body and his ſoul,

When

Line 123. *As Matter conſtitutes the whole, &c.*] In ſection the 13th, Dr. Prieſtley makes many obſervations on perſonal identity with reſpect to the future ſtate of man; to which, more particularly, this part of my Epiſtle refers. He ſays, page 156. "It was objected to the primitive Chriſtians, as it may be at preſent, that if all our hopes of a future life reſt upon the doctrine of a reſurrection, we place it upon a foundation that is very precarious. It is even ſaid, that a proper reſurrection is not only in the higheſt degree improbable, but even actually impoſſible; ſince, after death, the body putrefies, and the parts that compoſed it are diſperſed, and form other bodies, which have an equal claim to the ſame reſurrection. And where, ſay they, can be the propriety of rewards and puniſhments, if the man that riſes again be not identically the ſame with the man that acted and died?" To this objection he gives the following anſwer: "If I may be allowed, for the ſake of diſtinction, to introduce a new term, I would ſay, that *the identity of the man*, is different from *the identity of the perſon*; and it is the latter, and not the former, that we ought to conſider in a diſquiſition of this kind. This diſtinction I have mentioned may appear a paradox, but in fact ſimilar diſtinctions are not uncommon, and they may illuſtrate one another. Aſk any perſon to ſhow you the river Thames, and he will point to water flowing in a certain channel, and you will find that he does not conſider the banks, or the bed of the river, to be any part of it. And yet, though the water be continually and viſibly changing, ſo as not to be the ſame any one day with the preceding, the uſe of language proves that there is a ſenſe, in which it may be called, to every real purpoſe, the ſame river that it was a thouſand years ago. In the ſame manner, foreſts, which conſiſt of trees growing in certain places,

When he ſhall ceaſe to breath, will lie

Within the grave, moſt quietly,

Till

" preſerve their identity, though all the trees of which they conſiſt " decay, and others grow up in their places. Admitting, therefore, " that the man conſiſts wholly of *Matter*, as much as the *River* does of " *Water*, or the *Foreſt* of *Trees*, and that this Matter ſhould be wholly " changed in the interval between Death and the Reſurrection; yet if, " after this ſtate, we ſhall all know one another again, and converſe " together as before, we ſhall be, to all intents and purpoſes, the *ſame* " *perſons*. Our perſonal identity will be ſufficiently preſerved, and the " expectation of it at preſent will have a proper influence on our con- " duct. However, notwithſtanding I give this ſolution of the diffi- " culty for the ſatisfaction of ſceptical and metaphyſical perſons, I " myſelf believe the doctrine of the *Reſurrection of the Dead* in another " and more literal ſenſe. Death, with its concomitant putrefaction " and diſperſion of parts, is only a *Decompoſition*; and whatever is *de-* " *compoſed*, may be *recompoſed* by the being who firſt compoſed it; " and I doubt not but that, in the proper ſenſe of the word, the ſame " body that dies ſhall riſe again; not with every thing that is adventi- " tious and extraneous (as all that we receive by nutrition), but with " the ſame *ſtamina*, or thoſe particles that really belonged to the *germ* " of the organical body. And there can be no proof that theſe parti- " cles are ever properly deſtroyed or interchanged."—In this point Dr. Prieſtley is certainly right; the particles that eſſentially belong to the germ of the organical body conſtitute the man; and if theſe are found entire at the Reſurrection, they will be ſufficient to prove his identity. But, as he has taken it for granted, that the whole man, both body and ſoul, conſiſts of nothing elſe, ſhould theſe ſtamina happen to be diſperſed, deſtroyed, or become part of the compoſition of other bodies which have an equal claim to the ſame Reſurrection, how is it poſſible that the ſame body ſhould riſe again? Nothing, it muſt be allowed, is

impoſſible

Till the laſt trumpet ſhall him wake;
Then having given himſelf a ſhake,
And ſought about for every part,
His legs, his arms, his head, his heart,
(As every particle of clay
With which he whilome down did lay,
Muſt now be found, or elſe his ſoul
Will not ariſe compact and whole),
If then he finds his frame compleat,
He haſtes away his Judge to meet.
But this ſometimes is not the caſe;
All reſt not in their burial place:

impoſſible with God, and therefore he may find means to collect and reunite them; but the doctrine of a ſeparate *Something*, independent of the corruptible body, (eſpecially if it be conſidered as an emanation of the Deity, incloſed in a material vehicle infinitely refined, according to the platonic ſyſtem), renders any extraordinary exertions for this purpoſe unneceſſary.

N. B. The Author begs leave here to remark, that he means not to ſpeak ludicrouſly of the doctrine of the Reſurrection, when viewed in another light it makes part of his creed; he only intends to ridicule the ſuppoſition of the Materiality of the Soul, which would render it liable to the accidents humouroufly recited in the Epiſtle.

Some

Some more unfortunate, ſhall have
A deſert or a wat'ry grave;
The hunger of a kite allay,
Or of a ſhark become the prey;
Or elſe reduc'd to aſhes, find
Thoſe aſhes ſcatter'd by the wind.
And here the difficulty lies,
How the ſame man again can ariſe.

Poor Thomas in the Thames was drown'd,
And though long ſought could not be found.
In vain the boatmen drag, in vain
His wife laments, his friends complain:
Upon a bank the body lay,
Undriven by the ſtream away.
Near to the ſpot, ſecure from wheels *,
There dwelt a commonwealth of eels;

* The baſkets in which eels are uſually caught are thus termed by the fiſhermen.

Bred by the ſand, but not ſuſtain'd,
Their food from caſualties they gain'd:
No ſooner therefore do they find
The floating body there confin'd,
Than quick they gather round their prey,
And gnaw great part of it away:
But from th' inteſtines, heart, and brain,
Their moſt luxurious meals they gain.
Thus render'd light, the body floats;
Is ſeen from the ſurrounding boats;
And ſoon in this diſſever'd ſtate,
Laid in the grave t' await its fate.

At the laſt trumpet's ſolemn ſound,
How mangled will poor Tom be found!
And thus forever muſt remain,
As not a part can he regain:
For his devourers being caught,
And, at a feaſt, to table brought,

Become

Become the ſubſtance of each gueſt,
And there unclaim'd muſt ever reſt.
Thoſe who had fatten'd on his brain,
A famous orator's wit ſuſtain;
By the ſame means, his heart expands
The hearts of ſome of the train-bands;
And his inteſtines part became
Of an alderman I ſhall not name.
What, therefore, ſhall the culprit do?
Or how the etiquette go through?
What a ſad figure will he be
Before ſo grand an aſſembly!—
I had forgot—I think you ſay,
A germ and ſtamina of clay
(Of clay? of pow'rs) might ſtill remain,
From which he ſhall a being gain;
A ſpan-new mortal ſhall become—
A lucky circumſtance for Tom.

The thought, indeed, is not your own,
Butler long ſince has made it known *;
He ſays, " the Rabbins of the Jews
" Write there's a bone, which they call Luez,
" I' th'rump of man, of ſuch a virtue,
" No force in Nature can do hurt to;
" And, therefore, at the laſt great day,
" All th'other members ſhall, they ſay,
" Spring out of this, as from a ſeed
" All ſorts of vegetals proceed;
" From whence the learned ſons of art,
" *Os ſacrum*, juſtly ſtile that part."

Tom's *quondam* neighbour, Humphry Bate,
Experienc'd a harder fate.
Being ſhipwreck'd many leagues from land,
Some rav'nous ſharks, a helliſh band,

* Hudibras. Part III. Canto II. Line 1615.

Soon

Soon ſeiz'd him, and devour'd the whole
Of germ, of body, and of ſoul.
So that, annihilated, he
Is loſt to all eternity;
And, out of luck, can't claim a ſhare
Of what, by right, is neighbour's fare.
Doctor! forgive this levity;
In ſuch attacks the pen is free
Either to rally or confute,
As beſt its purpoſes may ſuit.
Truth only, it has been confeſt,
Of ridicule will ſtand the teſt.
You own the whole of your new lecture
Is founded chiefly on conjecture;
Indeed,

Line 220. *Is founded chiefly on conjecture.*] In ſection IX. page 103, the Doctor, ſpeaking of the ſubſtance of the Divine Being (and is not the ſubſtance of the human ſoul nearly as incomprehenſible, and as difficult to be aſcertained?) ſays, "Conſidering how much this ſub-"ject is above all human comprehenſion, it is no wonder that the moſt

Indeed, no truths can we aſſure
Upon a ſubject ſo obſcure;

Plac'd

" oppoſite opinions ſhould have been maintained with reſpect to it. " But this conſideration, at the ſame time that it ought to check our " boldneſs, ought likewiſe to have taught us mutual candour and in- " dulgence." And in another place, " I am fully aware how difficult " it is to expreſs myſelf with clearneſs on a ſubject ſo extremely " obſcure."—All arguments relating to theſe points, as they are merely conjectural, muſt for ever remain undecided. If we reaſon with the greateſt acuteneſs on them, they are ſtill only conjectures, and find no other ſupport than the opinion of their favourers. Concluſions drawn from the moſt minute philoſophical inveſtigations (the truth being abſolutely beyond the reach of mortals) can be attended with no greater degree of certainty, than obſervations made by a contemplative mind from a general view of nature; and Doctor Prieſtley's aſſertion, on which his ſyſtem of univerſal Materiality chiefly depends, that Matter conſiſts only of the powers of attraction and repulſion, without ſolidity, is no further concluſive, notwithſtanding he ſays, " that he knows it is poſſeſſed of ſeveral ſpheres of theſe powers, becauſe appearances cannot be explained without them," than the ſuppoſitions of thoſe, who from a ſurvey of the creation conclude that Matter, as it appears to be, is real, ſolid, and impenetrable. In like manner, the conteſt relative to the compoſition, origin, and future deſtination of man, muſt remain undecided till the grand developement. Contradictions, therefore, to the aſſertions even of the moſt eminent philoſopher, if urged with decency, cannot be deemed improper. That ſyſtem (as all are equally inexplicable) which ſeems beſt calculated to promote the real intereſt of mankind, and to give them the moſt elevated ideas of the Deity, ought certainly to be preferred. Whether mortals would not be more ſtimulated to lead a virtuous life, by ſuppoſing themſelves intelligences of celeſtial extraction, under a temporary exile, than by believing

Plac'd in whatever view you pleaſe,

Appear improbabilities.

Theſe

lieving that the whole of their compoſition conſiſts but of one ſubſtance, and this of periſhable duſt, uncertain of any future exiſtence; and likewiſe, whether it is not more rational to conclude, that this divine ſtranger, after being diſrobed of its earthly covering, will be removed to ſome other ſtate whole and undivided, than that after being putrified, ſeperated, and incorporated with other ſubſtances, it becomes neceſſary towards its future exiſtence, that the particles of which it had been compoſed ſhould be collected, and recompoſed by its Creator at the reſurrection, or, if that is impoſſible from its extreme ſeperation, that a new being be raiſed by him from a germ, which has been preſerved by ſome means or other amidſt the general corruption; whether, I ſay, the firſt or laſt of theſe ſuppoſitions are moſt rational, and moſt likely to conduce to the benefit of mankind, I leave to the judgement of my readers. Doctor Prieſtley aſſerts, that the former ſuppoſition ariſes from pride: He ſays, page 167. "I ſhall here enter into a pretty large hiſtorical "detail concerning the ſyſtem I have, in this treatiſe, called in queſtion, "(that of the ſoul of man being a ſubſtance diſtinct from the body) and "I hope to be able to ſhew, that it can by no means boaſt ſo re-"ſpectable an origin as many are willing to aſcribe to it. On the "contrary, I hope to make it appear that it has ariſen from nothing "but mere ſuperſtition, and the vain imaginations of men, flattering "themſelves with a higher origin than they had any proper claim to, "though the preciſe date of the ſyſtem may be of too remote antiquity "to be aſcertained with abſolute certainty at this day." If the doctrine of the divine origin of the human ſoul is founded on pride, it is a laudable pride, as it exalts our conceptions of the Great Firſt Cauſe, and conſequently heightens our adoration of him; it alſo tends e nable mankind to bear up under the evils of life, and, conſcious of

their

Indeed, no truths can we aſſure
Upon a ſubject ſo obſcure;

Plac'd

" oppoſite opinions ſhould have been maintained with reſpect to it. " But this conſideration, at the ſame time that it ought to check our " boldneſs, ought likewiſe to have taught us mutual candour and in- " dulgence." And in another place, " I am fully aware how difficult " it is to expreſs myſelf with clearneſs on a ſubject ſo extremely " obſcure."—All arguments relating to theſe points, as they are merely conjectural, muſt for ever remain undecided. If we reaſon with the greateſt acuteneſs on them, they are ſtill only conjectures, and find no other ſupport than the opinion of their favourers. Concluſions drawn from the moſt minute philoſophical inveſtigations (the truth being abſolutely beyond the reach of mortals) can be attended with no greater degree of certainty, than obſervations made by a contemplative mind from a general view of nature; and Doctor Prieſtley's aſſertion, on which his ſyſtem of univerſal Materiality chiefly depends, that Matter conſiſts only of the powers of attraction and repulſion, without ſolidity, is no further concluſive, notwithſtanding he ſays, " that he knows it is poſſeſſed of ſeveral ſpheres of theſe powers, becauſe appearances cannot be explained without them," than the ſuppoſitions of thoſe, who from a ſurvey of the creation conclude that Matter, as it appears to be, is real, ſolid, and impenetrable. In like manner, the conteſt relative to the compoſition, origin, and future deſtination of man, muſt remain undecided till the grand developement. Contradictions, therefore, to the aſſertions even of the moſt eminent philoſopher, if urged with decency, cannot be deemed improper. That ſyſtem (as all are equally inexplicable) which ſeems beſt calculated to promote the real intereſt of mankind, and to give them the moſt elevated ideas of the Deity, ought certainly to be preferred. Whether mortals would not be more ſtimulated to lead a virtuous life, by ſuppoſing themſelves intelligences of celeſtial extraction, under a temporary exile, than by believing

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their

Theſe, in a ſtrain ſomewhat too light,
I've pointed out to ſet you right.
Perhaps, in my Hypotheſis,
You'll think as far the truth I miſs;
But as I'm in the rhyming vein,
By your good leave I will explain
My Notions of the ſtate of man,
Though difficult it is to ſcan.
And that in language more ſedate,
Leſt you my ſyſtem reprobate.

With Plato, and the eaſtern ſages,
Whoſe wiſdom bleſſ'd the earlier ages,
I hold that once the GREAT FIRST CAUSE—
Here for a moment let me pauſe,
And ev'ry grand idea try,
Exert each ſearching faculty,

their native dignity, to act as becomes creatures of an angelic nature returning, through temporary trials, to that happy and perfect ſtate they once enjoyed, but which, through ſome imprudencies they have forfeited.

Thoughts comprehenſive to obtain—
My utmoſt efforts are in vain;
The mind on intricacies toſt,
In the profound abyſs is loſt.
In language, therefore, ſuch as Heav'n
To ſuit our feeble pow'rs has giv'n,
Such truths as mortals can attain,
With diffidence, will I explain.
Ages before time firſt began,
Beyond the mental reach of man,
Theſe ſages ſay, th'ETERNAL ONE
Exiſted by himſelf alone;
Confin'd to neither bounds, nor place,
His unknown eſſence fill'd all Space.
At length it pleaſ'd th' Almighty Will,
With other beings Space to fill;
Who in his happineſs might ſhare,
And his own glorious image bear.

Creation then began; and ſoon
Myriads receiv'd the gracious boon.
Sparks of his Eſſence he incloſ'd
In beauteous vehicles, compoſ'd

Of

Line 261. *Sparks of his eſſence he inclos'd.*] Doctor Prieſtley ſays, in ſection VI. page 54. " A Spirit, or an *immaterial* Subſtance, in the " modern ſtrict uſe of the term, ſignifies a ſubſtance that has no *extenſion* " of any kind, nor any thing of the vis inertiæ that belongs to Matter. " It has neither *length*, *breadth*, nor *thickneſs*; ſo that it occupies no " portion of ſpace; on which account the moſt rigorous metaphyſicians " ſay, that it bears no ſort of relation to ſpace, any more than ſound " does to the eye, or light to the ear: In fact, therefore, *Spirit* and " *Space* have nothing to do with one another, and it is even improper " to ſay that an immaterial being *exiſts in Space*, or that it *reſides* in " one place more than in another; for properly ſpeaking, it is *no* " *where*, but has a mode of exiſtence that cannot be expreſſed by any " phraſeology appropriated to the modes in which Matter exiſts. Even " theſe ſpiritual and intellectual Beings themſelves have no idea of " the manner in which they exiſt, at leaſt while they are confined by " groſs Matter." Though this may be the idea formed by modern metaphyſicians of the nature of ſpirit, and which has furniſhed the author of the diſquiſitions with the greateſt part of his objections to the exiſtence of a ſubſtance diſtinct from Matter, yet it is only in part juſt: when the doctrine is viewed through another medium, it carries with it a greater degree of rationability. The *interior* principle of man, being a particle of the Divine Eſſence, in its *primary* ſtate it was *indiviſible* and *without extenſion:* but being, at its creation, that is, at the time it was endowed with intelligence, compreſſed (if I may ſo expreſs myſelf)

Of Matter ſubtile, and refin'd,

Fit bodies for immortal mind.

To

ſelf) into an attenuated aërial body, without which Creation could not have taken place, it then became a ſeperate intelligence, viſible, active, local, and diſtinct from the Creator. Of theſe *two* ſubſtances, according to the wiſer ancients, is the human ſoul compoſed, and may be thus defined: a Spirit whoſe immediate properties are ſelf-motion or activity, ſelf-penetration, ſelf-contraction and dilation, together with a power of penetrating, moving, or determining the motion of Matter; properties to which are neceſſarily annexed the powers of perception, animadverſion, thought, reaſon, reflection, and choice. Theſe are the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics of the ſoul of man; theſe the peculiar properties which evince its conſtitutional frame to be eſſentially different from groſs Matter; and though, I allow, it is poſſible to philoſophize away every aſſertion on points merely ſpeculative, yet as we know that man is, ſomehow or other, endowed with the powers juſt mentioned, and we find, in innumerable inſtances, that Matter is of itſelf inactive, it is much more agreeable to reaſon to conclude that he is compoſed of two diſtinct principles, than of one only; notwithſtanding our great Creator has not thought fit to enable us in this ſtate, perfectly to diſcern the union, or to diſcover in what manner the intellectual part governs the material. As to the concluſion of the doctor's remark, quoted above, that "even theſe ſpiritual and intellectual beings themſelves have no idea of the manner in which they exiſt," it carries with it very little weight. That the ſoul really does exiſt, and may have exiſted in other ſtates prior to this, is not the leſs credible, from its not being able to retain a conſciouſneſs of ſuch exiſtence, as we know there are ſome ſtages of its preſent exiſtence, of which it retains no conſciouſneſs; ſuch as, in its infant ſtate, in deliriums, during intoxication or ſleep; and becauſe it is not in our power to recollect what paſſed in the mind, or the tranſactions

of

To theſe he properties allow'd
With which he was himſelf endow'd;
Diff'ring, however, in degree,
As finite from infinity.
Now ev'ry region of the ſkies
Abounds with beings good and wiſe;
Of various orders, various ſtations,
Deſcending through minute gradations;
In planetary orbs that roll
Round ev'ry ſtar, from pole to pole.
There, to the ſalutary laws,
Aſſign'd them by the Great Firſt Cauſe,
Pleaſ'd they ſubmit; and for awhile
Under the eaſy taſk they ſmile;
Each, with humility, ador'd,
And reverenc'd, their gracious Lord.

of the body during theſe periods, ſhall we doubt that we ever were in an infantine ſtate, delirious, intoxicated, or aſleep?—The limits of my preſent undertaking will not permit me to enlarge on this point.

Awhile

Awhile, through ev'ry circling ſphere,
Reign'd peace, and harmony ſincere.
But as no finite being can
Perfection boaſt; this glorious plan,
So wiſely fram'd, ſo juſt, ſo pure,
Could not ſtability enſure:
The will left free and unconfin'd,
(That ev'n th' Almighty could not bind,
Conſiſtent with his own decrees,
Nor leave out its propenſities)
By gradual ſteps, a daring few,
Through this allay, degen'rate grew;
Of their own excellencies vain,
They impiouſly all ſway diſdain;
And aided by a numerous band,
O'er whom, ſeduc'd, they gain'd command,
Boldly aſſail their Sov'reign's throne,
And all his benefits diſown.

But ſoon diſmay'd, in wild affright,
They ſeek to ſhun his wrath by flight;
Convinc'd how weak their pow'rs appear'd,
When with Omnipotence compar'd.
The conteſt over, they were driv'n
Beyond the utmoſt verge of Heav'n;
Where in a dreary dank abode,
Far from the preſence of their God,
Their fate, with murmurs, they lament,
And live in ſullen diſcontent;
Their great endowments they retain,
Which only give increaſe of pain.

At length (the deſtin'd years revolv'd)
Their pow'rful conqueror reſolv'd,
(In whoſe all pure and perfect mind
Mercy with Juſtice is conjoin'd)
His irkſome anger to abate,
And change the nature of their ſtate;

That by a rigorous probation
They may regain their priſtine ſtation.
For this intent, his plaſtic hand
Faſhion'd new worlds; at his command
Our ſolar ſyſtem roſe to view;
Each orb adapted to renew
By well-judg'd trials their obedience,
And ratify their vow'd allegiance:
Till by progreſſive ſteps and ſlow,
Once more felicity they know.
Inclos'd in moulds of earthy clay,
Subject to evils and decay,
Here for a period they remain,
To waſh away their prior ſtain,

Puniſh'd

Line 340. *To waſh away their prior ſtain.*] The arguments in favour of a pre-exiſtent lapſe are ſo many and ſo forcible, that I am perſuaded the diſbelief of it ariſes entirely from the neglect of a fair and unprejudiced diſcuſſion of it. This doctrine made a part of the religion of the Egyptians (a people famed for their learning) in its pureſt ſtate.

Puniſh'd and purified; at length,

Eſtabliſh'd in their former ſtrength,

And

ſtate. It was believed by the Brachmans of India, the Perſian Magi, the moſt ſenſible of the Jews, and by the greateſt part of the philoſophers and poets of Greece and Rome, among whoſe are the reſpectable names of Pythagoras, Euripides, Plato, Euclid, Virgil, and Cicero; to the authority of theſe may be added many Fathers of the Chriſtian Church, and numberleſs eminent writers of a later date. The infelicities and imperfections of man's preſent ſtate tend to confirm the belief of it; for an infinitely good and omnipotent Being, as our great Creator certainly muſt be, cannot be ſuppoſed capable of bringing creatures into exiſtence, without their conſent, to render them unhappy: and this undoubtedly is the caſe, if the preſent be the firſt ſtate of man; for he is "born to trouble as the ſparks fly upward;" and there lives not a mortal that does not experience ſome degree of unhappineſs. Can a mind ſo depraved, or a body ſo ſubject to infirmities, come immediately from the hands of a wiſe and beneficent Being? Certainly not. Nor can the numerous natural and moral evils "that fleſh is heir to," be inflicted on mankind either as a puniſhment for the diſobedience of their firſt parents, unjuſtly imputed to them, or for the errors to which they are by nature prone. Reaſon tells us, that for tranſgreſſions of a more heinous kind, committed in ſome prior ſtate of exiſtence, they are ſhowered down on mortals; and are intended both as a chaſtiſement, and, by bringing them to a proper contrition, as the means of recovering that purity and happineſs which they had forfeited. Without this explanatory key, the Chriſtian Religion is intricate and incomprehenſible; but with it, rational, conſiſtent, and worthy of its Divine Author.—For a more perfect explanation of this neceſſary article of Faith, I beg leave to refer my readers to "Berrow's Treatiſe on a Pre-exiſtent Lapſe," "Dr. Cheyne's Eſſay

"on

And their diſloyalty now own'd,

By a Redeemer's love aton'd,

They haſte away to happier ſpheres,

And rank, reſtor'd, with their compeers.

And

" on Regimen," and my " Philoſophical Diſquiſitions on the Chriſtian " Religion ;" where the diſpaſſionate and ſenſible will, I think, find ſuch arguments as cannot fail of impreſſing them with a favourable opinion of this doctrine, and which, at the ſame time, will tend to confute the degrading tenets of the Writer to whom this Epiſtle is addreſſed.

Line 345. *They haſte away to happier ſpheres.*] Whether departed ſpirits enter, immediately after their ſeparation from the body, into a ſtate of happineſs or miſery, as we are induced to believe by our Saviour's declaration to the penitent thief; or whether, according to St. Paul, they reſt quietly in the grave till a general Reſurrection takes place (on which Dr. Prieſtley's ſyſtem in a great meaſure depends), is at preſent undeterminable; and is a point on which, from the diſagreement of the two paſſages, the Chriſtian World will ever be divided. But was I permitted to hazard an opinion on the ſubject, it would be, that the immaterial part of man, or the ſoul before deſcribed, immediately on being releaſed from the mortal body in which it has been impriſoned, takes its flight, if, during its probation here it has endeavoured by leading a virtuous life to recover its original purity, to ſome ſtate where its powers will be enlarged, and its happineſs increaſed; but if, whilſt it remained on earth, regardleſs of its once exalted rank and purity, it has continued vicious and depraved, it will immediately paſs into ſome other ſtate, probably one of the remoter planets, where it will receive a body ſubject to greater evils, and theſe of a longer duration, than thoſe it had ſuffered here; till at length, after having thus progreſſively paſſed from one ſtate of increaſed miſery to another, it becomes ſenſible of its ſituation, and wiſhes to regain its

And after æras that amount
To more than human minds can count,
Each vital ſpark of heavenly flame,
Which from th'eternal eſſence came,
Shall into that again reſolve:
Created ſubſtance ſhall diſſolve,
By unknown means again reduc'd
To th'principle from whence produc'd.

original purity; which, by the ſame progreſſive ſteps, it will in time recover. When all the fallen ſpirits are by this means puniſhed and reclaimed, and they have gained the higheſt ſtate of perfection this ſyſtem will admit of, a general conſummation may then take place; the purified beings may return to their priſtine ſtate, and the ſun and planets, having anſwered the purpoſes for which they were created, be deſtroyed.—And who will be ſo proper to accompliſh this great work, and to fix the final doom of the erring ſpirits, as that exalted intelligence who paid their ranſom; the great Meſſiah; who, though he had never erred, took upon him a mortal body, and became man; that by the purity of his life he may be an example to mankind; by his inſtructions point out to them the only methods by which they can be reſtored to their former happineſs; and by his ſufferings and death, make an atonement to their juſtly-offended Sovereign for the tranſgreſſions they had committed. To Him alſo, it is probable, the deciſion of the fate of every mortal is committed, immediately on the releaſe of the ſoul from the body.—By this explanation, the declarations before referred to are rendered leſs contradictory than they appear to be; and, I truſt, it will not be deemed irrational or abſurd by the candid and unprejudiced Reader.

That,

That, finally, as ſays Saint Paul,
The great Supreme be all in all *.
Thus ſung the contemplative ſage
In ev'ry clime, in ev'ry age:
This creed the great Meſſiah taught,
Though, for wiſe ends, with myſt'ry fraught:
The war in Heaven has been the theme
Of many a bard of high eſteem:
And ſhall we, falſe, becauſe they 're old,
Such venerable records hold?—
Theſe are the ſouls that actuate
The vehicles of ev'ry ſtate
Which erring beings muſt contain
Their forfeit happineſs to gain.
And through this medium view'd, you'll find,
The union of the human mind,
With its inactive mortal frame,
Free from th'abſurdities you name.

* The Author of this Epiſtle is ſenſible, that the language made uſe of in the preceding ſyſtem is not ſo ſublime as the ſubject requires; but it would have been inconſiſtent with a work of this kind, if he had departed too far from the light, familiar, epiſtolary ſtyle, in which it is begun.

Believe me, Doctor, that the ſoul
(Body comprizes not the whole),
Diſtinct as that electric fire
Which rives, unſeen, the lofty ſpire,
But for a time pervades this clay;
When that diſſolves, it wings its way,
If Virtue bids, to happier climes,
Repentant of its former crimes;
Joyous at being thus ſet free
From its deſerv'd captivity.
Theſe fear no rav'nous bird or beaſt,
Nor ſeveration at a feaſt;
They riſe unhurt from every ill,
Prepar'd to meet their Sov'reign's will.
Which ſyſtem's neareſt truth, mine or your own,
Cannot in this imperfect ſtate be known:
Then let us both the fruitleſs ſearch give o'er,
" Wait the great teacher, Death; and God adore."

F I N I S.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM